

LNCT Agreement on the Working Week

The 35 hour week, which applies to all teachers, including school leaders and others in promoted posts, is not only a cornerstone of teacher terms and conditions, it is one of the main ways of protecting teacher health and wellbeing, which is a prerequisite to a successful education system that properly supports pupils.

The City of Edinburgh Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers acknowledges the extraordinary strains that are being placed on all staff during the pandemic, and salutes the efforts being made to support pupils and their families. It recognises that this has often exacerbated the already well-recognised workload crisis. At the same time, many of the mechanisms that would normally be used to help control workload, such as a fully costed annual Working Time Agreement and calendar, cannot be implemented in their usual form. This Agreement is an attempt to help schools to collegiately consider their decisions over working practices during the period of the pandemic, and most particularly for the time when pupils will be experiencing blended learning.

The working week is made up of 3 components:

22.5 Hours Class Contact

There is clear direction from Scottish Government that face to face contact with pupils must be maximised. There is also an acknowledgement that virus control measures require changes to usual practices in schools – including staggered starts and ends and, potentially, more supervision of pupils over breaks and lunches to ensure social distancing and hygiene practices can be maintained.

It must be recognised that contact time includes *all* of those occasions when teachers are required to be with pupils - and indeed that teacher-pupil contact in some more informal settings outside of normal lessons will form an essential part of helping pupils recover and readjust to school, and should be appropriately valued when drawing up school timetables. This time cannot exceed 22.5 hours.

Promoted post holders are normally given reduced class contact time to enable them to overtake aspects of their remit. Where the current crisis means that their contact time is increased beyond what they would normally expect, there must be an explicit identification of which parts of the management remit can be deferred until such time as this time can be restored. *This applies to all promoted post holders, including headteachers and deputies.*

5 Hours Collegiate Time

Whilst it is for individual schools to reach collective agreement on the specifics of this, the LNCT advises that it would be appropriate for most or all of this time to be focused on the Adaptation and Renewal efforts of the pandemic response. Further, given the changing nature of crisis, it is important that there is a degree of flexibility in how this time is allocated – most likely through regular discussion by the School Negotiating Committee. It may be that the best approach would be for each SNC to allocate collegiate tasks in blocks of 4-6 weeks at a time, and then review as the situation evolves.

Activities that should be set against this time include:

- reviewing, updating and sharing risk assessments and other key health and safety advice;
- reaching collective agreement about approaches to blended learning;

- undertaking professional learning and training in blending learning approaches;
- sharing resources to support blended learning – it is particularly important to promote a collegiate approach to this, and where a teacher may be in a small department or not have a stage partner then colleagues working across schools is essential;
- assessment, tracking and monitoring;
- reviewing curricular approaches in light of adaptation and renewal priorities.

There must be a clear acknowledgement that this is a radically new way of working for many, and realistic time must be allocated to overtake tasks. This is particularly important because infection control measures will mean that some usually simple tasks, such as collecting in jotters for marking, cannot happen and alternative approaches will need to be developed.

It is recommended that staff log time spent on particular activities and adjust the collective agreement on an ongoing basis in the light of this.

It is **essential** that schools are realistic about developing new ways of working, especially blended learning approaches, and do not try to move too quickly to adopt unfamiliar pedagogies. A gradualist approach, that takes proper account of the time needed to embed new practices, is more likely to be successful.

7.5 Personal Preparation and Correction

This continues to be time that is entirely at the discretion of the teacher to direct to aspect of their professional practice.

At all times, the key principle must be to protect the health and wellbeing of staff, as this is the bedrock of supporting pupils. This can best be done through a realistic assessment of the working week. As part of this, the LNCT will continue its practice of monitoring school WTAs to ensure best practice.

The LNCT notes that the Scottish Government has publicly committed to ensuring local authorities have the resources they need to maintain high quality educational provision during the pandemic. Where it becomes clear that a school cannot safely meet the needs of its pupils whilst adhering to the principles of the working week, the School Negotiating Committee should contact the Joint Chairs of the LNCT, who will consider what further steps can be taken to secure the necessary support.